



SHARING THE ROAD

**LARGE COMMERCIAL VEHICLES, NO-ZONES,
CYCLISTS & CHALLENGING CONDITIONS**

Grades 9-12 | Lesson 7



In the Street Smart video, Lila nearly rear-ends a semi-truck while driving to get tacos because she didn't know she was in its blind spot. Andie explains the **NO-ZONES** — four blind spots every driver needs to know.

This lesson covers No-Zone awareness, extended stopping distances, safe merging around large commercial vehicles, multi-modal intersections and adverse weather driving.

Lesson

Overview





BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

Identify the four **NO-ZONES** around a large commercial vehicle and explain the danger of each.

Apply the **THREE-SECOND** following distance rule and the 1-car-length-per-10-mph merging rule.

Calculate why a loaded semi-truck needs significantly **MORE** stopping distance than a passenger car.

Apply Arkansas' **THREE-FOOT** cyclist clearance rule and navigate a multi-modal intersection safely.

Adjust **DRIVING BEHAVIOR** for night driving, fog, rain and other reduced-visibility conditions

Learning Objectives

Key Vocabulary

NO-ZONE:

One of four blind spots around a large commercial vehicle. If you can't see the driver's face in their mirror, you're in one.

THREE-SECOND FOLLOWING DISTANCE:

Minimum gap behind a large commercial vehicle — keeps you visible in their mirrors and gives reaction time.

MERGING CLEARANCE RULE:

Allow one car length of space per 10 mph before merging in front of a large commercial vehicle.

STOPPING DISTANCE (COMMERCIAL):

A loaded large commercial vehicle at 65 mph needs up to 500 feet to stop — 40% more than a passenger car.

OVERDRIVING HEADLIGHTS:

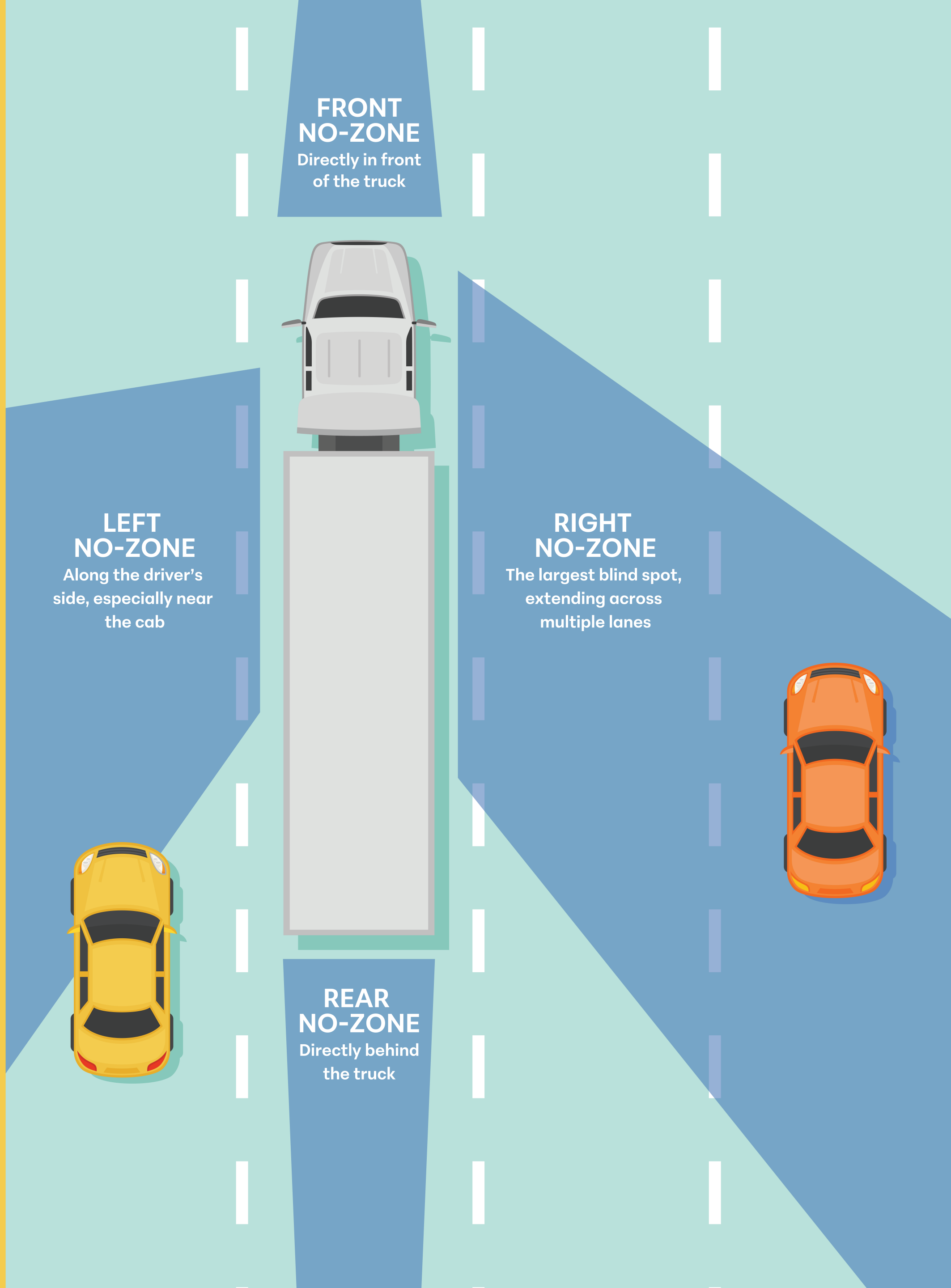
Driving at a speed that prevents stopping within the distance illuminated by headlights.



The No-Zones:

In the video, Lila was invisible to the semi-truck driver — not because she was hiding, but because she was in the **NO-ZONE**.

Semi-trucks have **NO REAR-VIEW MIRROR**. They rely entirely on **SIDE MIRRORS**.



REAR NO-ZONE

- If you can't see the driver's face in their side mirror, they can't see you. Give three seconds of following distance

TWO SIDE NO-ZONES

- Both sides have blind spots. Never linger. If passing, give extra space and extra time
- Never drive directly alongside a large commercial vehicle — even briefly in the side No-Zone is too long

FRONT NO-ZONE

- Never cut in front and slow down. The driver can't see directly in front, and the semi-truck can't stop quickly
- Merging Rule: Allow one car length for every 10 mph you're traveling before cutting in front

Stopping Distance & Passing

A loaded semi-truck at highway speed is not a large car — it is a physics problem.

At 60 mph, merging in front of a semi-truck requires six car lengths of clearance (ONE PER 10 MPH).

CAR AT 65 MPH: ~300 FEET TO STOP vs. LOADED SEMI AT 65 MPH: UP TO 500 FEET (40% MORE DISTANCE)



UNDERSTANDING STOPPING DISTANCE

**changes every decision you make
around large commercial vehicles.**

Never cut in front of a semi-truck and
immediately slow down.

You become the **FRONT NO-ZONE** problem.

A SEMI-TRUCK AT

65 MPH NEEDS

THE LENGTH OF 1.5

FOOTBALL FIELDS TO

STOP COMPLETELY.

PLAN ACCORDINGLY.



Multi-Modal Intersections

MULTI-MODAL INTERSECTION:

Vehicle + cyclist + pedestrian + bus:
check all users before turning right

ARKANSAS THREE-FOOT RULE:

Provide at least three feet of
clearance when passing any cyclist



Challenging Conditions: Night, Rain & Fog

Reduced visibility doesn't change how the road works — it changes how much information you have.

The driver's job is to **ADAPT** before conditions force the issue.

Every reduced-visibility condition demands the same response: REDUCE SPEED and INCREASE FOLLOWING DISTANCE

NIGHT DRIVING:

Slow down, increase following distance, use high beams only when no oncoming traffic and when you are not immediately following someone

RAIN:

Wet pavement multiplies stopping distance; use low beams in heavy rain to reduce glare

FOG:

Low beams and fog lights only; high beams reflect back and reduce vision further





OVERDRIVING HEADLIGHTS:

Driving faster than you can safely stop within the distance you can see at night.

Overdriving your headlights increases the risk of hitting wildlife, striking a stalled vehicle or crashing into debris in the roadway.

This is why drivers should slow down at night, especially on rural roads, in bad weather, or when visibility is limited.

Class Discussion

1

In the video, Andie says Lila was in the semi-truck's blind spot — and the semi-truck driver wasn't moving over because they couldn't see her. If the semi-truck can't help having No-Zones, whose responsibility is it to stay out of them?

2

Have you ever felt invisible as a pedestrian or cyclist? What would need to change — in driver education, road design, or laws — to make that less common?

3

Lila was frustrated that the truck was going slowly and moved up close. Have you ever been in a car when that happened? What would you say now?

Key Takeaways

- If you can't see the semi-truck driver's face in their mirror, they cannot see you — get out of the **NO-ZONE**
- **THREE SECONDS** of following distance behind any large commercial vehicle — so they can see you and you can react
- Merging in front: **ONE CAR LENGTH** per 10 mph — at 60 mph, that's six car lengths before cutting in
- A loaded semi-truck needs up to **500 FEET** to stop — never cut in front and slow down
- Arkansas requires **THREE FEET** of clearance when passing a cyclist — minimum
- Every reduced-visibility condition: **REDUCE** speed and **INCREASE** following distance



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